

SOVIET SUBMARINES: NEW CHALLENGE FROM CUBA

With her now-you-see-it-now-you-don't submarine base at Cienfuegos, Russia appears to be reaching again for the nuclear advantage that Khrushchev failed to get during the missile crisis of 1962

BY KENNETH O. GILMORE

N May 14, 1970, a flotilla of seven Soviet vessels churned along Cuba's south coast, swung through a narrow passage-way and anchored in the calm waters of Cienfuegos Bay. The squadron consisted of a sleek 500-foot guided-missile cruiser, a rugged missile-armed frigate, an oiler, a 9000-ton submarine tender and three submarines, one of them nuclear-powered. Amid a cluster of officials at a dockside greeting party was the

KENNETH O. GILMORE, Reader's Digest Washington Editor, is co-author with James Monahan of *The Great Deception—The Inside Story of How the Kremlin Took Over Cuba*.

smiling Soviet ambassador to Cuba, Aleksandr Soldatov.

This little-noted ceremony was merely the curtain-raiser for an audacious Soviet probe just 200 miles from American shores. In the weeks to come, Cienfuegos (One Hundred Fires) and its deep-water bay would move swiftly into that first circle of national-security hotspots that give our defense guardians nightmares.

Alarm Bells. The Soviet flotilla soon departed for Havana, but by midsummer Cuban underground links to the United States told of strange things happening in Cienfuegos. In a once-posh waterfront section called Punta Gorda, long-time residents were hastily removed from their homes and replaced by Russian technicians. The newcomers kept strictly to themselves, with the help of barbed wire and guard dogs. More arresting yet, fishermen entering the harbor noticed construction activity on Cayo Alcatraz, a 15-acre island in the eastern portion of the bay (see map page 66). It appeared

that workmen were putting up two new buildings behind a cover of newly planted trees. From the city, 3½ miles away, citizens could see the nightly glare of floodlights on Cayo Alcatraz.

In mid-August, one of the U-2 reconnaissance planes that have regularly inspected Cuba since the 1962 missile crisis was ordered to photograph Cienfuegos Bay. The film confirmed considerable construction activity on Cayo Alcatraz: several buildings were going up, plus a cement pier. While serious, this wasn't sufficient to ring many alarm bells. Perhaps, with Soviet assistance, the Cubans were only improving their port. But most officials suspected something far more menacing.

By late August, their worst fears were confirmed. Another squadron of Soviet ships had left its North Fleet naval base at Polyarny, near Murmansk, and was steaming toward Cuba. It included a 9000-ton Ugra-class submarine tender—No. 922—and a gigantic Alligator-class tank-landing ship. Days later, the latter docked in Havana and unloaded two huge barges. These were then towed around the western tip of Cuba and brought into Cienfuegos Bay. On September 9, the sub tender itself entered the harbor.

Now alarm bells started ringing in the highest quarters. U.S. Navy experts knew that the tender was a floating machine shop, capable of repairing and checking out Russia's newest Yankee-class, nuclear-powered, ballistic-missile submarines—up to four at one time. The barges would fulfill another vital purpose: when the water which Soviet sub re-

gously radioactive, it is pumped into such barges and hauled away (rather than being discharged by the sub at sea, where it could leave a trail for trackers).

By mid-September, further reconnaissance flights indicated that Cienfuegos Bay had become a beehive of activity. Bulldozers were at work. Two barracks, bunking approximately 100 men each, had been completed, plus storage facilities. A communications center was partly finished. A steel submarine net had been laid down near Cayo Alcatraz. There were even recreation areas, including a field for playing soccer—a favorite Soviet sport.

Secret "Understanding." On September 25, the United States for the first time openly expressed its concern. "The Soviet Union can be under no doubt that we would view the establishment of a strategic base in the Caribbean with the utmost seriousness," Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, told reporters.

Since then a series of murky, often mysterious events surrounding Cienfuegos have left many U.S. citizens in utter confusion. The barges remained in Cienfuegos Bay (they were still there in early spring), while the tender performed a tango of maneuvers in and out of the harbor and up and down the Cuban coast. U.S. authorities said that no Yankee-class submarines had entered port to be serviced by a tender. Moscow denied that a base was even being built—although photographs proved that construction continued.

Meanwhile, the White House disclosed that a secret, unwritten "understanding" had been reached with Soviet officials. It purportedly precluded the servicing of Russian nuclear-missile submarines from Cuba or in the Caribbean.

"We expect them to abide by the understanding," President Nixon declared last January. "I believe they will." Soon after that, the Russian tender headed home. But it is typical of the whole affair that another Soviet naval squadron arrived a few weeks later, including a tender

continued

which cruised close to Cienfuegos.

No one can predict with certainty what specific steps the Soviets will take in the Caribbean during the months ahead—or what the U.S. reaction will be. But, based on an accumulation of data from numerous authoritative sources, some sobering conclusions can now be drawn.

1. Just as in 1962, the Kremlin has attempted—and may attempt again—to use Cuba as a base from which to shift the balance of nuclear power. How? With a sub base in Cuba, the Soviets could significantly increase their submarines' on-station time near the United States. On the average, Russia's ballistic-missile subs remain on constantly submerged patrol for 60 days—but about half this time is spent shuttling the 8000 miles to and from Murmansk for overhauls and crew changes. With a Cuban servicing facility, a sub operating in mid-Atlantic could stay on duty 50 days rather than, say, 32, by avoiding the 28-day trek to and from Russia. And one sitting silently at the bottom of the sea off the west coast of Florida could remain there for 56 days rather than a mere

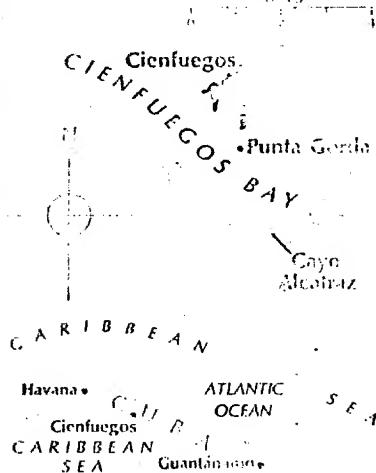
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Cienfuegos tell us—if we choose to listen—that the Soviet Union believes it can reach into the Western Hemisphere at an side of Cuba. An elaborate system ever-accelerating rate, with less and of microphones (to pick up the less fear of risk. Confident that they sounds of Soviet subs) is strung out now have the nuclear muscle to meet along the ocean floor off America's any challenge, the Kremlin's leaders east coast. But when submarines are seeking to demonstrate that the enter the Gulf of Mexico by coming U.S.S.R. is a major new force in the around the southern side of Cuba, American sphere. Thus Cienfuegos, the signals are snuffed out by the as one student of Soviet affairs put it, "is but a toe in the tub to test the

2. The establishment of a Soviet submarine base in Cienfuegos de-fear that the recent pattern of Soviet pends entirely on the presence of a activity in the Caribbean is comparable. If a tender is stationed in Cienfuegos, as it was for many days last year, that port becomes a submarine base in the fullest sense of the word. With its expert mechanics, nuclear-missile specialists, thousands of spare parts and tons of supplies, a tender can handle almost all of a submarine's needs. Remove it, and what remains is a relatively small naval facility. The tender alone constitutes a serious threat, because it can service submarines in hidden coves, or at sea if it is not too rough. But an excellent harbor such as Cienfuegos provides a mighty, additional advantage.

The result of all this: The United States has put the Russians on notice that a tender operating from Cuba which services offensive submarines "within the harbor or at sea" would violate the pledges that Moscow made in 1962 to keep offensive missiles out of Cuba. This is the essential element in the "understanding" reached last fall during "conversations" held chiefly between Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin.

The details of these talks remain classified, but it has become clear that, in return for Russian assurances not to set up a submarine base in Cuba, the United States has indicated that it will not invade Cuba. This promise in effect renews a "no invasion" commitment made by President John F. Kennedy in 1962 as part of an overall understanding with Nikita Khrushchev.

Whether the Russians will abide by the new understanding is quite another matter. Certainly there is no illusion in Washington about the Kremlin's trustworthiness. "Nothing the Soviets say, orally or on paper, is worth any more than our ability to know at all times that it is being followed in good faith," says one ranking official.



20. Asked what the servicing of submarines from Cienfuegos could mean, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird said: "It would increase the threat by about 33 to 40 percent."

The threat, for now, consists chiefly of Russia's Yankee-class submarines, vessels similar to our own Polaris subs. The Yankees carry 16 atomic-warhead missiles, each with a range of 1500 miles. From the Caribbean, they can strike cities from El Paso, Texas, in the southwest, to Topeka, Kan., in the midwest, to Washington, D.C. From the Gulf of Mexico their missile coverage is even more extensive, southeast corner of California to North Dakota to New York.

Where will Moscow's next probe be, and the next? How much "strategic seepage" can we tolerate before the hemisphere's security is irreparably neutralized, or worse? The answer lies in how willing we are to maintain our defensive might in the face of Russia's ominous military expansion. If we fall behind, we should be prepared to read about yet-unknown strategic surprises. For, as Sen. Henry Jackson (D., Wash.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and one of the most knowledgeable men in Congress on Soviet arms strategy, has said: "In its foreign policy, the Soviet Union is like a burglar who walks down a hotel corridor trying the handles of all the doors. When he finds one unlocked, in he goes."

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

CIA Plot to Blast Cuba Refinery

By Jack Anderson

The full, fantastic story of the Bay of Pigs has been buried for 10 years deep in the Central Intelligence Agency's fortresslike headquarters near Langley, Va.

All the world knows that CIA-trained Cuban exiles stormed ashore on a Cuban beachhead and were cut to pieces by Dictator Fidel Castro's militiamen 10 years ago today. But the CIA has concealed from the world how it continued to send assassination teams and commando squads against Castro.

Bit by bit, stories of these post-invasion sorties are leaking out. We have already revealed, for example, how the CIA used a swashbuckling underworld figure, John Roselli, to make six unsuccessful assassination attempts upon Castro.

The CIA assigned two trusted agents, Billy Harvey and "Big Jim" O'Connell, to direct the murder missions. On the first two tries, Roselli's assassins sought to slip poison pellets into Castro's food. The next four attempts were made by sniper teams equipped with high-powered Belgian rifles, explosives and two-way radios.

There were midnight power-boat dashes to secret landing spots on the Cuban coast and machine-gun exchanges in the dark of night with Cuban patrol boats. The last assas-

sination team actually reached a Havana rooftop within rifle range of Castro. But like the others, this squad also was caught and tortured.

Refinery Raid

Now we have learned of a CIA plot to blow up Cuba's most productive oil refinery. Painstaking preparations were made, and a commando team was given intensive training.

Using U-2 photos so detailed that they showed every bush, Maj. Edward Roderick, an Army engineer on loan to the CIA, constructed a mockup of the plant. He even figured out how mortars could be pre-aimed, then placed by commandos in a precise spot and fired on the run.

But he junked the idea because a human error of an inch or two could send a mortar shell into an inhabited area. Then the whole plan was junked after President Kennedy's assassination.

We have also learned that the CIA scattered \$20 bills around like green confetti to finance the clandestine anti-Castro operations. Bales of money were delivered to Cuban exile leaders, who gave no accounting of how they spent it.

Some were stashed by men since killed. Other thousands were buried in former pirate lairs in the Florida Keys. Still more thousands were strewn on the beaches of Cuba where would-be raiders left their bones.

Yet some of the raiders survived. One of them, a young ex-Army captain named Bradley Ayers, has emerged from under cover. He has given us access to his notes, documents and draft chapters of a book he is writing about his raids for the CIA.

"The Cuban experience," he told us, "has been a plague on the national conscience as it has been on mine. I think it's high time that at least part of the story be told."

CIA Assignment

A former paratrooper, pilot and demolitions expert, Captain Ayers was training rangers at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., when he received orders to report to the Army's Special Activities Group in Washington.

He was put through physical, psychiatric and lie detector examinations for a week, then he was hustled over to the CIA's Cuban section.

He was questioned for three days by CIA officials who, finally satisfied, provided him with a cover story, phony documents and a ticket to Miami. He adopted the name Daniel B. Williams and was assigned to a CIA front called Paragon Air Service.

The CIA lodged Ayers and Roderick in a luxurious beach house in Key Biscayne. The two undercover Army men worked out of a CIA front—a columned building with the cover name of Zenith Technical Enterprises—on the south

campus of Miami University. Through its doors passed some of the nation's most secret operatives: the dapper John Roselli, rugged Bill Harvey, "Rip" Robertson and a huge New Mexican remembered only as "The Big Indian."

Ayers got the assignment of training a tough Cuban cadre in the swamps of the Everglades and the beaches of the Keys. He was supposed to teach them enough surf landing skill, underwater swimming, demolition, boat handling and simple survival for them to lead commandos into Cuba to blow up the multi-million-dollar refinery.

The story of their night landings in Cuba and the great oil refinery fizzle will be told in a future column.

Cuba

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Pawley: Adlai Threatened to Quit Over Bay of Pigs

By NIXON SMILEY
Herald Staff Writer

The full story of the disastrous Bay of Pigs has never been told, but Miami's William D. Pawley, who played a major role behind the scenes, has thrown some new light upon the reasons for the failure. Pawley also revealed hitherto untold details about the role he played in obtaining the freedom of three of the survivors 15 months later with payment of \$175,000 ransom.

Pawley, a wiry anti-Communist, has been inside or about the fringes of U.S. activities in Latin America for more than 40 years.

"By the time the President (Eisenhower) realized that Castro was, indeed, a Communist and not the Simon Bolivar he had been depicted," said Pawley, "the State Department already had forced Batista to flee, leaving Cuba in control of Castro. I had several conferences with the President and finally he was convinced that the anti-Communist Cubans in Florida should be armed and given every assistance to overthrow the Communist regime."

PAWLEY WORKED closely with Allen Dulles and the CIA in recruiting young Cubans from the anti-Castro refugees arriving in Miami. These were flown to Guatemala for training.

Among the Cubans assisting Pawley was Fabio Freyre, 40, father of eight. Freyre was from a well-known Cuban family and was then living in Palm Beach. After helping to recruit enough men for a brigade, Freyre insisted on going to Guatemala himself and joining the men he had signed up.

"The brigade had been given 12 attack bombers," said Pawley, "and in the plan it was contemplated that Castro's small air force would be destroyed before the band went ashore. In



William D. Pawley
...recalls his role

fact, it was the opinion of the military experts who advised us in connection with the landing that if the enemy air force was not destroyed the invasion should not be attempted. The Cuban fighters were led to believe, as were the rest of us, that there would be no air power to confront them."

In order to throw Castro off guard, President John Kennedy announced on April 12, five days before the scheduled invasion, that there would be no "intervention in Cuba by United States armed forces." At that time Kennedy had been President a little more than three months and appeared to be strongly in favor of the invasion, planned during the administration of his predecessor.

IN THE PREDAWN darkness of Saturday, April 15, bombers belonging to the invaders bombarded four Cuban airports, destroying all but six of Castro's planes. A second strike, planned for Sunday morning, never came off.

"What happened," said Pawley, "was that Adlai Stevenson, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, got in touch with the secretary of state, Dean Rusk, and got him to go to the White House and call on

son made it clear to Rusk that he would not remain as ambassador to the United Nations if the United States permitted any more bombing of Cuba.

"Rusk went to the White House, accompanied by Chester Bowles, the President's special adviser on Latin American affairs, and they persuaded the President to call off the air strikes planned for Sunday morning. Use of the bombers was limited to the invasion area, and the admiral in charge of the Navy operations was ordered to give no air assistance to the invaders.

"Right then and there the President should have ordered the admiral to call off the invasion and return to Puerto Cabezas (the Nicaraguan port which served as the staging area). Unfortunately, the landing of the men was allowed to proceed on Monday morning as planned. The operation was carried out with the full expectation that the men would be free of attack from the air. When Castro's air force struck they were unprepared."

THE FIRST DAY Cuban jets shot down five of the invaders' bombers which were on the scene to protect the landing. The Castro forces also sank one of the ships used to transport the exiles, with considerable loss of life. Another of the transport vessels was damaged.

"Meanwhile, 35 of our jet fighting planes were flying above the battle and could have knocked Castro's planes out of the sky in a few minutes," said Pawley, "but the admiral had orders from the White House and he dared not interfere."

"After witnessing the fiasco, the admiral ordered the remaining boats to withdraw and the men ashore were abandoned."

overwhelming numbers of Castro troops.

The prisoners were paraded into the huge Blanquita Theater in Havana where they were individually interrogated before television cameras and radio microphones. Pawley heard the voices of two close friends, Fabio Freyre and George Govin, listening with admiration and concern as they defended the United States and condemned Cuban communism.

A year passed. Efforts to obtain the release of the men proved futile. Meanwhile, Pawley received word that his friends, Freyre and Govin, were starving to death in prison.

"I THOUGHT there must be some way to get these men out," said Pawley. "I knew Castro needed money desperately. It occurred to me that for a price we might get the men released. I consulted with Freyre's relatives, and they agreed that if the price was within their means they would raise the money. I went to see Govin's family and got the same answer."

Pawley called his friend, Livingston Merchant, U.S. Ambassador to Canada, a country which maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba. Would Merchant ask the Canadians to find out from Castro if he would put a price on the prisoners? Castro agreed.

Pawley, meanwhile, had begun to worry about the consequences of ransoming two men from well-to-do Cuban families in exile — and both of them white. It would give Castro an important propaganda lever. He would be able to point out that only the rich came out, while the poor boys, particularly the black, were given no consideration.

"I remembered the name

The Bay of Pigs invasion occurred 10 years ago this week. For some, it was over quickly; but for others, it meant 15 months in prisons in Cuba. William D. Pawley of Miami played a role in obtaining their release. Here he reveals previously undisclosed details of his efforts.

of a youth who had greatly impressed me when he was interrogated along with the other men at the Blanquita Theater," said Pawley. "His name was Nestor Williams. When he was questioned, he answered with great courage. He said he had left Cuba for Miami to escape communism, that he has a good job in Miami, that he was respected and that he loved Miami and the United States.

"WHEN THE interrogator reminded Williams that as a Negro he could not swim off the beaches of Miami Beach, Williams replied: 'To some extent that's true, but I did not return to Cuba to swim in the Havana Country Club pool; I came to fight communism.' I liked that answer, and now I was determined to obtain his release if possible."

Castro wanted \$25,000 for Williams' release. Pawley put that up himself, along with \$100,000 from Freyre's family and \$50,000 from Govin's family. It was deposited in the Royal Bank of Canada in the name of the Government of Cuba, through the Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of Prisoners of War. Thirty-six hours later, in July of 1962, the three stepped off a Pan American World Airways plane at Miami International Airport.

Pawley remained in the picture until the remainder of the 1,113 prisoners were released in exchange for medical supplies valued in excess of \$50 million.

"I was always ashamed that we had to bargain for those men," said Pawley, "rather than go there and secure their release by force as we easily could have done."

Cels

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Castro Stalker Worked for the CIA

By Jack Anderson

The mystery man whom the Central Intelligence Agency recruited to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro has been laid up in the sick ward of the Los Angeles County jail.

He is handsome, hawk-faced John Roselli, once a dashing figure around Hollywood and Las Vegas, now a gray, 66-year-old inmate with a respiratory ailment.

Confidential FBI files identify him as "a top Mafia figure" who watched over "the concealed interests in Las Vegas casinos of the Chicago underworld."

Roselli has admitted to friends that he was a rum runner during the Roaring Twenties. Operating along the East Coast, he learned how to evade Coast Guard cutters and police patrols.

His name later became linked with the biggest names in the Chicago and Los Angeles underworlds. He also developed contacts in the Cuban underworld before Castro took over the Havana gambling casinos.

He had the right background for a hush-hush mission that the CIA was planning in 1961. As part of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CIA hoped to knock off Castro and leave Cuba leaderless.

Risks Neck

Roselli was recruited for the

job by Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent, who admitted to us that he had handled undercover assignments for the CIA. He refused, however, to discuss the details. This is the same Maheu, incidentally, who is now involved in a legal battle over phantom billionaire Howard Hughes' Nevada operations.

Roselli was so flattered over being asked to perform a secret mission for the U.S. government that he paid all his expenses out of his own pocket and risked his neck to lead the assassination teams on the Cuban coast.

In James Bond fashion, he held whispered meetings in Miami Beach hotels with Cubans willing to make an attempt on Castro's life. Once, he called on Chicago racket boss Sam Giancana to line up a contact. The confidential files report that Giancana had "gambling interest and an interest in the shrimp business in Cuba." However, the Chicago gangster took no direct part in the assassination plot.

Roselli made midnight dashes to Cuba with his hired assassins in twin powerboats. Once a Cuban patrol ship turned its guns on his darkened boat, tore a hole in the bottom and sank the boat. Roselli was fished out of the water by the other boat, which escaped into the shadows.

In earlier columns, we reported how the CIA furnished

Roselli with deadly poison capsules which he tried through a relative of Castro's chef to plant in the dictator's food. Later, marksmen armed with high-powered Belgian rifles attempted to infiltrate close enough to gun Castro down.

All told, six assassination attempts were made, the last in the spring of 1963. Throughout this period, Roselli worked under the direct supervision of two secret CIA agents, William Harvey and James (Big Jim) O'Connell.

Roselli's Reward

The FBI which got wind of the assassination plot, has tried to pump Roselli for information. But he was sworn to silence by the CIA, and up to this moment, he hasn't broken it.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department, as part of its crackdown on organized crime, tried to nail Roselli. The FBI discovered that his Chicago birth records had been forged, that his name was really Filippo Sacco and that he had come to this country from Italy as a child. He was convicted for failing to register as an alien.

He was also convicted for conspiracy to rig card games at Los Angeles' exclusive Friar's Club.

Of Roselli's two CIA associates, Harvey has now retired to Indianapolis and O'Connell

is still on the CIA payroll. Both admitted to us a friendship with Roselli but refused to discuss their CIA activities. Harvey said he had a "high regard" for Roselli and called the Friar's Club case a "bum rap." Said Harvey: "The Friar's Club indictment is phony. Roselli had no more to do with that than I had."

Roselli's lawyers are now trying to get clemency for their client, citing our stories about his secret CIA service.

Soviet Attack Sub Reported Off Cuba

By George C. Wilson

Washington Post Staff Writer

A Soviet nuclear-powered attack submarine has been spotted in the waters off Cuba, the Pentagon confirmed yesterday in discussing Russia's fourth naval cruise into the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

The Navy has launched a study, due in April, on how to keep track of Soviet submarines that ply the waters in America's back yard, where the Sousus listening system along the Atlantic Coast cannot hear them.

Asked yesterday "how concerned" he was about the presence of the Soviet submarine, President Nixon said at an impromptu news conference at the White House that "we are watching it very closely."

He referred to his statement of Jan. 4, declaring: "You may recall I said that if a nuclear submarine were serviced from Cuba or in Cuba that this would be a violation of our understanding with regard to the Soviet Union's activities in putting offensive weapons or a base in Cuba."

"As far as this submarine is concerned," Mr. Nixon continued, "the question is a rather technical one—whether it is there for a port call or whether it is there for servicing. We are watching it very closely."

The United States watches Cuba continually, relying most heavily on the photographic eyes of the high flying U-2 aircraft. So the deployment of surface ships can be observed. Submerged submarines must be monitored by other methods, with Cuban waters an especially difficult problem because existing underwater detection systems do not reach behind the island.

Jerry W. Friedheim, a Pentagon spokesman, identified the submarine as one in the N Class but did not name it. The N-Class subs are designed to ferret out and destroy other submarines, not to launch Polaris-type nuclear missiles.

The Nixon administration apparently regards such nuclear-powered attack submarines

with Moscow on how Cuba can be used for Soviet forces.

Friedheim used the term "harbor hopping" in discussing the presence of the Soviet sub, a Kresta-class guided-missile cruiser, a tanker and a submarine tender in "Cuban waters." He declined to specify what was covered by the term Cuban waters.

The cruiser, Friedheim said, left "Cuban waters"—presumably from Havana—Tuesday night and headed into the Gulf of Mexico. He put its location as "400 miles northwest of Havana." The Pentagon's newly adopted information policy on such movements is to disclose when Soviet ships enter and leave Cuban waters rather than describing their activities in between.

"We will not be detailing harbor hopping daily," Friedheim said. This differs from the Nixon administration's previous emphasis on describing Soviet naval movements in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

The Soviet press on Nov. 5 announced to the world that the latest task force of Russian ships includes a submarine. But yesterday was the first official U.S. confirmation of this.

Administration officials in the past have expressed concern that Soviet sub tenders at the Cuban port of Cienfuegos might service nuclear submarines in the Caribbean or Gulf.

Cuba

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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Castro Plot Raises Ugly Questions

By Jack Anderson

The plot to kill Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, hidden for 10 years from the public, raises some ugly questions that high officials would rather keep buried deep inside the Central Intelligence Agency.

1. Has the CIA tried to assassinate any other leaders? John McCone, who headed the CIA during the six attempts to knock off Castro, denied emphatically that the CIA has tried to kill anyone. But ex-Sen. George Smathers, one of John F. Kennedy's closest friends, told us the late President suspected that the CIA had arranged the shootings of the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo in 1961 and South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963.

2. Did President Kennedy personally sanction the plot against Castro? The preparations to assassinate the Cuban dictator began during the last months of the Eisenhower administration as part of the Bay of Pigs scheme. All six attempts, however, were made during 1961-63 when Mr. Kennedy occupied the White House. Smathers told us he once spoke to the late President about assassinating Castro. Mr. Kennedy merely rolled back his eyes, recalled Smathers, as if to indicate the idea was too wild to discuss. Subsequently, Mr. Kennedy told Smathers of his suspicion that the CIA may have been

behind the Trujillo and Diem assassinations.

3. Did the late Robert Kennedy know about the assassination attempts? After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Kennedy swore to friends he would like "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." He put his brother, Robert, in charge of the CIA with instructions to shake it up. The CIA made five attempts on Castro's life after the Bay of Pigs while Robert Kennedy was riding herd on the agency.

4. Could the plot against Castro have backfired against President Kennedy? The late President was murdered nine months after the last assassination team was caught on a Havana rooftop with high-powered rifles. Presumably, they were subjected to fiendish tortures until they told all they knew. None of the assassination teams, however, had direct knowledge of the CIA involvement. The CIA investigators had represented themselves as oilmen seeking revenge against Castro for his seizure of oil holdings.

PLOT BACKFIRE?

Former associates recall that Robert Kennedy, deeply despondent, went into semi-seclusion after his brother's assassination. Could he have been tormented by more than natural grief? He certainly learned that the assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, had been active in the pro-Castro move-

ment and had traveled to Mexico to visit the Cuban Embassy a few weeks before the dreadful day in Dallas. Could Bob Kennedy have been plagued by the terrible thought that the CIA plot, which he must at least have condoned, put into motion forces that may have brought about his brother's martyrdom?

The last surviving brother, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), could give us no insight. His brothers had never spoken to him about any assassination attempts against Castro, he said. He was aware, he volunteered, only that Sen. Smathers had talked to the late President about eliminating Castro.

Smathers told us that President Kennedy seemed "horified" at the idea of political assassinations. "I remember him saying," recalled Smathers, "that the CIA frequently did things he didn't know about, and he was unhappy about it. He complained that the CIA was almost autonomous.

"He told me he believed the CIA had arranged to have Diem and Trujillo bumped off. He was pretty well shocked about that. He thought it was a stupid thing to do, and he wanted to get control of what the CIA was doing."

But McCone, disagreeing vigorously, told us that "no plot was authorized or implemented" to assassinate Castro, Trujillo, Diem or anyone else.

"During those days of ten-

sion, there was a wide spectrum of plans ranging from one extreme to another," McCone admitted. "Whenever this subject (assassinating Castro) was brought up—and it was—it was rejected immediately on two grounds. First, it would not be condoned by anybody. Second, it wouldn't have achieved anything."

There was also talk in high places, McCone acknowledged, of supporting a coup to oust Diem. The former CIA director said he had argued against this at a secret session with both Kennedy brothers. He had contended that there was no one strong enough to take Diem's place and that a coup, therefore, would bring "political upheaval."

"I told the President and Bobby together," recalled McCone, "that if I were running a baseball team and had only one pitcher, I wouldn't take him out of the game."

The November, 1963, coup caught the United States completely by surprise, he said. While the plotters were moving on the palace, he said, then-Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was visiting Diem. Adm. Ulysses Sharp, then our Pacific commander, had also been present, but had left early to go to the airport.

McCone said President Diem escaped through a tunnel but was caught in nearby Cholon and "shot in a station wagon."

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Cuba.

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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

6 Attempts to Kill Castro Laid to CIA

By Jack Anderson

Locked in the darkest recesses of the Central Intelligence Agency is the story of six assassination attempts against Cuba's Fidel Castro.

For 10 years, only a few key people have known the terrible secret. They have sworn never to talk. Yet we have learned the details from sources whose credentials are beyond question.

We spoke to John McCone, who headed the CIA at the time of the assassination attempts. He acknowledged the idea had been discussed inside the CIA but insisted it had been "rejected immediately." He vigorously denied that the CIA had ever participated in any plot on Castro's life. Asked whether the attempts could have been made with his knowledge, he replied: "It could not have happened."

We have complete confidence, however, in our sources.

The plot to knock off Castro began as part of the Bay of Pigs operation. The intent was to eliminate the Cuban dicta-

tor before the motley invaders landed on the island. Their arrival was expected to touch off a general uprising, which the Communist militia would have had more trouble putting down without the charismatic Castro to lead them.

After the first attempt failed, five more assassination teams were sent to Cuba. The last team reportedly made it to a rooftop within shooting distance of Castro before they were apprehended. This happened around the last of February or first of March, 1963.

Nine months later, President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald, a fanatic who previously had agitated for Castro in New Orleans and had made a mysterious trip to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City.

Among those privy to the CIA conspiracy, there is still a n a g g i n g suspicion—unsupported by the Warren Commission's findings—that Castro became aware of the U.S. plot upon his life and somehow recruited Oswald to retal-

iate against President Kennedy.

To set up the Castro assassination, the CIA enlisted Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent with shadowy contacts, who had handled other undercover assignments for the CIA out of his Washington public relations office. He later moved to Las Vegas to head up billionaire Howard Hughes' Nevada operations.

Maheu recruited John Roselli, a ruggedly handsome gambler with contacts in both the American and Cuban underworlds, to arrange the assassination. The dapper, hawk-faced Roselli, formerly married to movie actress June Lang, was a power in the movie industry until his conviction with racketeer Willie Bloff in a million-dollar Hollywood labor shakedown. The CIA assigned two of its most trusted operatives, William Harvey and James (Big Jim) O'Connell, to the hush-hush murder mission. Using phony names, they accompanied Roselli on trips to Miami to line up the assassination teams.

The full story reads like the script of a James Bond movie,

complete with secret trysts at glittering Miami Beach hotels and midnight powerboat dashes to secret landing spots on the Cuban coast. Once, Roselli's boat was shot out from under him.

For the first try, the CIA furnished Roselli with special poison capsules to slip into Castro's food. The poison was supposed to take three days to act. By the time Castro died, his system would throw off all traces of the poison, so he would appear to be the victim of a natural if mysterious ailment.

Roselli arranged with a Cuban, related to one of Castro's chefs, to plant the deadly pellets in the dictator's food. On March 13, 1961, Roselli delivered the capsules to his contact at Miami Beach's glamorous Fontainebleau Hotel.

A couple of weeks later, just about the right time for the plot to have been carried out, a report out of Havana said Castro was ill. But he recovered before the Bay of Pigs invasion on April 17, 1961.

Four more attempts were made on Castro's life.

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